

15 Good Government Reforms Illinois Lawmakers Approved This Session

BGA bettergov.org/news/15-good-government-reforms-illinois-lawmakers-approved-this-session

7/13/2017



The Illinois General Assembly approved more than a dozen pieces of legislation the Better Government Association backed as good government reforms. In this 2017 Spring legislative session, the BGA supported 15 legislative items (14 bills and 1 resolution) that were adopted by the Legislature. The 14 bills now await the Governor's signature.

These 15 actions reflect what bipartisanship and compromise can achieve in Springfield. Incremental, yet steady steps towards making government more efficient, transparent and accountable.

Let's take a look at the individual bills:

Government Streamlining - 5 Passed

- **SB 3:** A major consolidation bill that allows county governments statewide to consolidate units of local government under their jurisdiction. County boards may propose legislation for the dissolution of a unit of local government, subject to a referendum. In addition, SB 3 permits townships to be dissolved into overlapping municipalities, allows townships to be larger than 126 square miles, and lets townships that share a border to merge.
- **HB 607:** Provides the option of a referendum on whether to abolish a road district in a township. The

township government would take over the responsibilities of that road district. If a majority of voters are in favor, the road district is abolished 90 days after the certification of the vote.

- [HB 2407](#): Allows a municipality to absorb neighboring territory even if the municipality and territory are separated by a lake, river, or other waterway. In addition, the portion of the body of water that separates the municipality and territory is also annexed by the municipality.
- [HB 3521](#): This bill discontinues the offices of township collector in Sangamon County, which includes Springfield, on January 1, 2022. The Sangamon County Treasurer assumes the duties of the township collectors in the county.
- [SR 241](#): Creates the “Working Group on Local Government Consolidation” to identify ways to make consolidation of government units easier in Lake County and the 31st Legislative District. The Working Group will meet no less than once every three months, will accept public testimony, and submit findings to the General Assembly no later than December 31, 2018. [This is a Senate Resolution that has been adopted and in effect, no governor signature required]

Financial Accountability - 3 Passed

- [HB 1896](#): A bill that prohibits the accumulation of township funds exceeding 2.5 times the annual average expenditure of the previous three fiscal years. This bill is important because it prevents township governments from unnecessarily storing excessive amounts of dollars in reserves, as documented in [this 2011 BGA investigation](#).
- [HB 2379](#): Requires the governor of Illinois to include a “fiscal impact statement” when filing executive orders that spend any state funds, or increase or decrease state revenues. The fiscal impact statement will provide an estimate of the anticipated changes in state expenditures or revenues and will be published alongside the executive order on the governor’s website.
- [HB 3649](#): This bill requires each state agency to provide a monthly report to the State Comptroller about its financial liabilities, whether funds have been allocated for those liabilities, and interest penalties.

Transparency - 3 Passed

- [HB 623](#): Requires the salaries of state employees to be rounded to the nearest hundred dollars rather than providing the exact figure on the IL Comptroller’s “Online Ledger” website for the past calendar year. The exact figure may be posted for other years, at the Comptroller’s discretion. The intent of this bill was to address identity theft since access to exact salary figures can make it easier for identity thieves to open new lines of credit in their victims’ names.
- [HB 2538](#): This bill has the [Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning](#) (CMAP) livestream and record their meetings and publish them on their website. CMAP was created in 2005 and is the official regional planning organization for northeastern IL counties of Cook, DuPage, Kane, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will. This bill is important because having meetings streamed and recorded online allows for greater public access to the discussions and functions of CMAP.
- [HB 2585](#): Allows for a unit of local government or school district to place notices in any secular newspaper that is published within the jurisdiction of that unit of local government or school district.

Pensions - 2 Passed

- [SB 701](#): For the purposes of calculating a pension benefit, the financial allowance for vehicle usage will not be considered an “earning” for all participating employees after the enactment of this law. Some state employees are provided an allowance (on top of their salary) for the expenses that come from operating a vehicle (i.e. gasoline, maintenance). That allowance could be used to bolster one’s pension benefit, by

inflating their earnings. However, should this bill become law, that can no longer happen for new hires.

- [HB 350](#): A bill that prevents a pension from being distributed to a survivor of a pension recipient if the survivor is convicted of a felony connected to the recipient's service. This bill stems from an incident in Fox Lake involving Lt. Charles Gliniewicz and his widow. Lt. Gliniewicz staged his suicide to look like a homicide in order to cover his theft of public funds. His widow is facing charges for her alleged involvement in the theft of public funds as well. There's a debate over what sort of benefits his widow is entitled to in light of these revelations.

Election Reform - 1 Passed

- [SB 1933](#): Mandates the State Board of Elections and the Office of the Secretary of State to establish an automatic voter registration program. People will automatically be registered to vote when they visit state agencies such as the the Secretary of State's office, and people can more easily update changes of address. People can choose to opt out of AVR.

Cybersecurity - 1 Passed

- [HB 2371](#): Requires state employees (other than employees of the legislative branch, the judicial branch, a public university, or a constitutional office other than governor) to annually undergo cybersecurity training by the Department of Innovation and Technology.

These 15 legislative measures help Illinois move toward better government. The BGA will continue to work with lawmakers and advocacy groups to advance the mission of greater efficiency, more transparency and stronger accountability in units of government across Illinois.